



# Rock Talk

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

## 'Octagonal' Sword from Bronze Age Burial in Germany Is So Well Preserved It Shines

Archaeologists in Germany have unearthed a sword from a Bronze Age burial, and the weapon is in such good condition that it still gleams.

The 3,000-year-old sword, discovered in the town of Nördlingen in Bavaria, was found in the burial of a man, woman and child. It appears that the trio were buried in quick succession, but it's unclear if they are related to one another, according to a [statement](#) the Bavarian State Office for Monument Protection released on Wednesday (June 14).

The sword is so well preserved, "it almost still shines," according to the translated statement. The weapon has an ornate octagonal hilt crafted from bronze that now has a greenish tinge, as bronze contains copper, a metal that oxidizes when exposed to air and water.



### This Month's Roundup of Stories

- [Octagonal Sword](#)
- [Secretary's Report](#)
- [Giant Geode or Thunderegg?](#)
- [Silent Auction](#)
- [Fascinating Fluorite](#)
- [Yooperlites](#)
- [Bench Tips](#)

Archaeologists dated the sword to the end of the 14th century B.C. Sword discoveries from this time and region are rare, as many middle Bronze Age graves were looted over the millennia, the team said.

Only skilled smiths could make octagonal swords. The handle, which has two rivets, was cast over the blade in a technique known as overlay casting. However, the blade doesn't have any visible cut marks or signs of wear, suggesting that it had a ceremonial or symbolic purpose, according to the statement. Even so, the sword could have easily served as an active weapon, as the center of gravity on the blade's front end suggests that it could have effectively slashed opponents.

Read the entire article at [LiveScience.com](https://www.livescience.com)

Clubhouse Address:  
3357 Susan Dr.  
Spring Hill, FL 34606

# Secretary's Report

## *Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson*

### *Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting Meeting Minutes Date 6-14-23*

The meeting was called to order by President Judith Birx at 7:15pm.

We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

There were no new members to recognize.

There was 1 guest in attendance: Rachel.

Leslie Newberry made a motion to accept the minutes of our May meeting as printed in the newsletter, Michael Steverson seconded. Passed by all members.

Treasurer Janet Wheeler gave the Treasurer's report. Melodye Steverson made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report subject to audit. Seconded by Roberta Oldread. Approved by all.

President Birx began by asking VP Wojcik to explain what she and Pam Gonzales will be doing with the Silver classes this month.

VP Wojcik stood and addressed the membership.

The Silver smithing classes will be held on the 24th and they are full.

There will be Silver 1, which will be the basics and step by step instruction for creating a bezel set pendant. Silver 2 will be creating a setting with prongs and a flower decoration attached. That class will be flexible and will allow students to change and design their own creations.

President Birx asked Secretary Steverson when her Cabochon classes would start. She replied that the classes would start in the next 2 weeks and her first students would come from members that had signed up in the past when she was not able to present her class due to family issues.

President Birx then questioned Carla Howell regarding the Wire Wrapping class she volunteered to teach. Carla said she was ready and asked to tell her when to start. President Birx will contact the Senior Center to see when it will be available for Carla to teach.

President Birx stated that she and several members went up to buy rocks from Jeff Atkinson, a former club member, who lives in Homosassa. Jeff will be advertising in our newsletter and selling rocks to members as he has done in the past.

Club members that wish to be vendors in our Annual Gem Show in December need to apply and reserve their tables by August 15th. A \$30 deposit is due with the application, balance due in 30 days.

President Birx announced that the Board had awarded Lex Kolias with a scholarship to The William Holland School of Lapidary Arts. Lex was very grateful and thanked everyone.

VP Wojcik announced that July's meeting program will be a talk given by Rick Marshall from the AFMS, detailing the benefits that AFMS offers its members.

There will also be a Silent Auction that night. This is a long time club favorite! Members will bring rocks or rock related items to donate to the club, which will be placed on a table so everyone can bid on them by writing their name and bid amount on the sheet of paper assigned to the item. When the auction time is over, whoever put in the highest bid gets that item! All proceeds go to the club.

The VP continued by saying the August meeting program will be "Meteorites!", presented by Leslie Newberry. Carla Howell will give a demonstration and instruction on Wire wrapping in September.

Michael Steverson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Janet Wheeler seconded, passed by all.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.*

*No Board of Directors meeting minutes, as there was no June Board of Directors meeting.*



# Giant Geode or Thunderegg? See What's Inside This Massive Dugway Geode Bed Find!

About 1.5 years ago, Julie from AZ Rockhound Expeditions and her son set out on a memorable rockhounding trip to the famous Dugway Geode Beds in Utah. Despite her broken foot, she and her son embarked on this expedition together where they stumbled upon a truly extraordinary find.

While exploring the area, they came across a massive rock buried in the middle of the road. After carefully excavating it, they discovered that it measured an impressive 12 inches across and 10 inches high. The duo faced a puzzling question: Was this colossal rock a hollow geode or a solid thunderegg?

The mother and son believed the rock to be a hollow geode, but many others insisted that it was likely a solid thunderegg. Eager to uncover the truth, they enlisted the help of a friend who owned a large rock saw, perfect for cutting the rock in half and revealing its hidden nature.

Once the rock was cut open, they were delighted to find a large cavity filled with small, purple-colored druzy quartz crystals. The surrounding rhyolite boasted a breathtaking color, while the agate fortification banding within the rhyolite only added to the specimen's awe-inspiring beauty.

"Actually it's a thunder egg first, because it formed in rhyolite, and a geode also because of the cavity and crystals. A thunder egg can also be a geode but a geode can never be a thunder egg.

She goes on to say, "That was a fabulous find, probably a once in a lifetime! It is amazing and gorgeous, that's the important part!"

To see the remarkable unveiling yourself, watch the video on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/tP4hK3kpWxY>.

Read the entire article at [RockSeeker.com](http://RockSeeker.com)





# Silent Auction



Sh-h-h-h-h! Make your bid & take home a treasure!

It's our (sort of) annual Withlacoochee Silent Auction

at our **July 12th** monthly meeting.

Have fun & raise funds for the club.

But, our silent auction can't work without your help.

Bring a Rockhound-related item to donate and sell...

rocks, slabs, jewelry, those spare diamonds hanging around the house. *(No old socks or broken lamps, please.)*

Then, bring some bucks & plan on bidding on your fellow members' contributions. All monies goes to the club.

**Caution**- sometimes the bidding gets fierce...have courage and be kind.



# Fascinating Fluorite!

## A Favorite of Everyone

The fluorite mineral is a favorite among collectors. Fluorite crystals are often large, well-developed with a rainbow of colors, relative abundance and affordability. But fluorite has something else going for it. Fluorite has a history as fascinating as its mineralogy.

Although not yet isolated, this mysterious element was named in 1813. French physicist, André-Marie Ampère, acknowledged the element's hazardous nature. He proposed the name "phtor," which is the Greek word for "destructive." English chemist Sir Humphry Davy adhered to tradition and coined the word "fluorine" from the old Latin fluor. In 1826, scientists adopted the words "fluoride" for fluorine-containing compounds and "hydrofluoric acid" for Flusspatäure.

Unfortunately, chemists seriously underestimated the dangers of fluorine. More than a dozen researchers lost their health or their lives by inhaling or contacting elemental fluorine or fluorine-based vapors. They became known as "fluorine martyrs."

During World War II, large quantities of fluorite from the Illinois-Kentucky Fluorite District were shipped with false bills of lading via circuitous routes to nonexistent destinations to confuse any possible Axis spies. The fluorite's true destination was a top-secret facility in Tennessee, where it was converted to elemental fluorine. It was then converted to uranium hexafluoride gas for the separation of the fissionable uranium-235 isotope needed to make the atomic bombs that ended World War II.

Fluorite (calcium fluoride,  $\text{CaF}_2$ ) crystallizes in the isometric system and has a Mohs hardness of 4.0, a specific gravity of 3.18, and perfect, four-directional cleavage. It often occurs in hydrothermal veins and is a common gangue component of the sulfide ores of lead, zinc and silver.

Today, seven million metric tons of fluorspar (the commercial term for impure fluorite) are mined worldwide each year. Half is converted to hydrofluoric acid, a feedstock for numerous industrial chemical processes. Most of the remainder is used to smelt steel and aluminum.

China now produces half the world's fluorspar; Mexico and South Africa are also important sources.

Because of its strongly bound fluorine and calcium ions, the fluorite in our mineral collections is quite safe and stable.

But, never heat fluorite or treat it with acid or any other chemical. As the fluorine martyrs so tragically learned, there is much more to fluorite than meets the eye.

Read the entire article at [RockNGem.com](http://RockNGem.com)



# What are Yooperlites?

## They glow!

These fluorescent sodalite rocks are found along the shores of the Great Lakes and are especially popular in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and the shores of Lake Superior. Collecting fluorescent rocks is popular and understanding what makes minerals fluorescent is important.

Erik Rintamaki of Michigan's Upper Peninsula first spotted something unfamiliar and intriguing along the shores of Lake Superior under the setting sun and evening sky. Erik named these fluorescent sodalites "Yooperlites," and caught the attention of geologists, mineralogists, rockhounds, educators and just about anyone who had lived in or visited the Upper Peninsula.

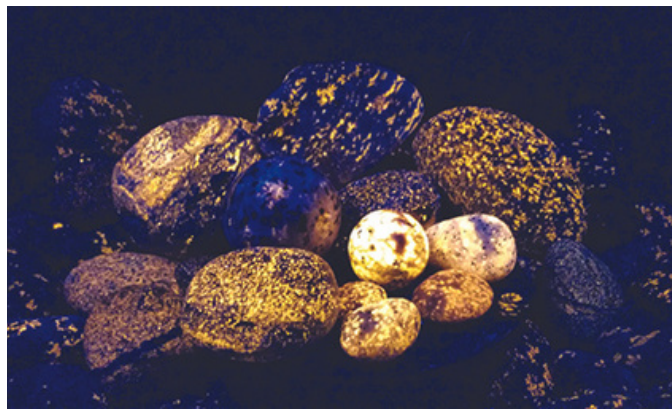
The origin of the name "Yooperlites" is the abated abbreviation of "U.P." for Michigan's Upper Peninsula. "Yoopers" are the area's colloquial citizenry. "Lite" refers to the rock's fluorescent properties from sodalite.

Since making the discovery, Erik has spent quite a bit of time talking about Yooperlites and leading rockhounding tours. Of course, as a dedicated rockhound whose hobby is also his business, a good day rockhounding is a good day all around.

As we all know, necessity has been called the mother of innovation, and in Erik's case, it may be the mother of discovery, too. In addition to being a collector and dealer of Lake Superior agates for years, he also teaches others how to find the elusive U.P. treasures.

In his quest to become more successful with his knowledge of agates, his curiosity caused him to see if agates would fluoresce. One such night in June of 2017, with an inexpensive 3 LED UV longwave flashlight, he went rock hunting around 4 a.m. and discovered a rock that looked like a hot lava ball. He was "excited beyond containment and wondered what it was," Erik explained.

Read the entire article at [RockNGem.com](http://RockNGem.com)



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## Field Trips

**"Note: The Withlacoochee Rockhounds Club does not sponsor field trips other than trips that are sanctioned by the SFMS (The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies).**

**Our club insurance is through SFMS and does not cover excursions not listed on their website as safe."**

# What Gives Minerals Color?

What gives minerals color? It's an important question because mineral color is a primary way to identify minerals and assess their value.

Minerals owe their colors to several different causes including impurities and their chemical elements. But a host of minerals get their color from their internal structure, called a physical phenomenon, that affects the way light is reflected to the viewer.

Opal is a well-known example of a mineral whose color is caused by a physical phenomenon called "diffraction." Other phenomena include iridescence, a rainbow effect seen in iris quartz and pearls; chatoyancy, which we see in cat's-eye stones and some malachite; asterism, which is displayed in star stones; aventurescence, as seen in aventurine quartz and sunstones; adularescence, seen in moonstone; and play of color, or the alexandrite effect, seen in the alexandrite variety of chrysoberyl and some garnets. In every one of these groups, the cause of the color is related to some internal physical structure and not a metallic impurity or element in the mineral's structure.

For centuries, people tried to explain the play of color seen in many opals. Finally, in the 1960s, we developed equipment that could actually see the internal structure of opal. It revealed a very orderly arrangement of submicroscopic spherules of silica. These spherules and the spaces between them acted as a diffraction grating, spreading light into its various colors. The sizes of these spherules and the angle the light struck them, coupled with the viewer's angle, determined which color wavelengths were canceled and which ones were reflected. Diffraction of light results in opal's play of color.

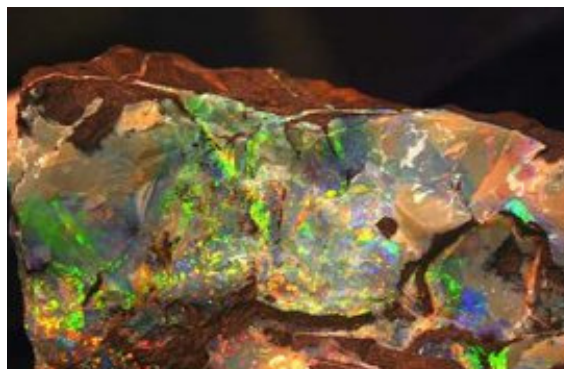
A more common mineral that gets its play of color from diffraction is the feldspar mineral labradorite. This mineral can develop in huge formations, resulting in outcrops that give off flashes of color. Diffraction caused by perfectly aligned tiny spherules of silica split light into its lovely colors in precious opal.

Labradorite crystallizes in thin wafers in parallel layers that repeat to form a diffraction grating. This has the effect of separating light into its colors, giving labradorite a play of color that depends, in part, on the angle of the source of light. The thickness of each crystal and each cluster of crystals in their parallel layers also affect which color is seen. Labradorite can flash bronze, blue, green, and in some cases, red or violet in an overall groundmass of gray to blue. It is thought the gray color of the groundmass is due to the scattering of light by the internal structure.

Another attractive feldspar mineral is adularia. Like labradorite, it develops as thin crystals that line up in parallel arrangement and act as a diffraction grating. But adularia does not show a play of color. The twinned arrangement of the crystals simply scatters light. While it can also be shades of gray, pink, peach, green and brown, it is best known for a bluish-white color that is reminiscent of the moon. Properly cut adularia gives off a cloudy sheen that seems to float throughout the polished stone. We give this lovely form of adularia the name "moonstone."

Why does adularia have little color, while labradorite is a riot of color? This is due to minor variations in the refractive index of the labradorite crystals involved. In adularia, the refractive indices of the crystals are virtually the same.

Read the entire article at [RocknGem.com](http://RocknGem.com)





## You're a Member!

Every member of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds is a bona fide member of the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies.

What does that mean to you?

You'll find out when Rick Marshall, Communications Officer of SFMS speaks to us at the Wednesday July 12th meeting about the benefits of your membership. Learn to maneuver through the SFMS website, order DVDs and videos from the SFMS library, get the informative LODESTAR newsletter, attend William Holland, the Rockhound Roundup & more.

**Enjoy the Silent Auction, plus find out what's happening at SFMS...all at our July 12th meeting.**

**Withlacoochee Rockhounds**

Our monthly club meeting is held at the Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club, 3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM



[www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com](http://www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com)

**Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk**

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**Advertisers Needed**

Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club treasure Janet Wheeler: [ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com) or send to: Withlacoochee Rockhounds, PO Box 9634, Spring Hill, FL 34811-6634

**Withlacoochee Rockhounds**

**Purpose**

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, workshops, and field trips. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.

Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

**Dues**

Dues are \$35.00 annually for adults, and \$5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

**Club Meeting Location and time**

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3357 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. The meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

**2023 Club Officers and Appointees**

President	Judith Birx	352.587.1702	<a href="mailto:judithblrx@hotmail.com">judithblrx@hotmail.com</a>
Vice President	Janice Wojcik	813.677.6263	<a href="mailto:jfwojcik@verizon.net">jfwojcik@verizon.net</a>
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	<a href="mailto:melodye@designsbymelodye.com">melodye@designsbymelodye.com</a>
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	<a href="mailto:ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com">ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com</a>
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	<a href="mailto:highlander56@gmail.com">highlander56@gmail.com</a>
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	<a href="mailto:highlander56@gmail.com">highlander56@gmail.com</a>
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	<a href="mailto:ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com">ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com</a>
Gem Bag Coordinator	Gloria DuPont	352.848.5199	<a href="mailto:ddupont@tampabay.rr.com">ddupont@tampabay.rr.com</a>
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	<a href="mailto:highlander56@gmail.com">highlander56@gmail.com</a>

**Board of Directors**

Judith Birx (President)	Janice Wojcik (Vice President)	Melodye Steverson (Secretary)	Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Roberta Oldread	Leslie Newberry	Roger Wheeler	Michael Steverson
			Ralph Barber (Past President)





# Bench Tips from Brad Smith

Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

### DEBURRING A HOLE

When you drill a hole, there's always a burr produced on the underside of the metal.

We all have our ways of removing them - typically by filing or sanding the area smooth.

But doing it this way will put scratches on your piece that will have to be polished off.

A quick way to remove the burr is to grab a drill that's two or three times larger than your hole.

Simply twist it in the hole to cut off the burr.

I usually do this twisting by hand, but if you have many holes to do, it's easier on your fingers to put the drill into a holder like a pin vice.



### CLEANING STEEL SHOT

Steel shot in a vibratory or rotary tumbler works great to burnish and shine your finished silver pieces. But a common problem is how keep the shot clean. Carbon steel shot can get rusty if exposed to the air, and even stainless steel shot can sometimes develop a blackish coating that's hard to remove.

My solution of choice to clean the shot is Classic Coke. Just pour an ounce or two over the shot and let the tumbler run for an hour or so.

A bad case might require a second cleaning. Some folks like to let the bubbles in the Coke dissipate before using it so that gas pressure doesn't build up in the tumbler barrel.

I've heard that it's the phosphoric acid in Coke that does the trick.

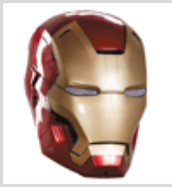
While you're waiting for the shot to clean up, just settle back and enjoy the rest of the Coke.



Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books  
[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)

# Rock Talk Funny Papers





## From The Editor

### Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

If you missed our June 2023 meeting, you missed True Grit. Club Vice-President Janice Wojcik's presentation could well have been title "everything you wanted to know about grit and abrasives, but were afraid to ask!". Members left the meeting with a new understanding about what goes into the things we use to polish our stones.

Do NOT miss this month's meeting. We're having a silent auction. Bring a Rockhound-related item to donate to the auction. The proceeds of the auction go to help the club. Details at the start of the meeting.

All of you should have received an e-mail regarding membership renewal. We are now into 2023, and your dues for the new year are due. You can pay them at the meeting. You can mail them into the address on the membership form. Or as an added convenience this year, your membership renewal e-mail has a link where you can pay for your membership via credit card. No muss, no fuss. Any member who has not paid their 2023 dues is not considered a member at this time. It is imperative that your membership dues are paid. They help us pay for club functions, and more!

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still are not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address. I have a few of you who unsubscribed from the mailings. I cannot add you back to the list. You have to subscribe to get back on the list. It's a permissions thing.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

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### Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

*During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.*

*These are SCAMS.*


*Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monetary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.*

# Rockhounds Advertisers

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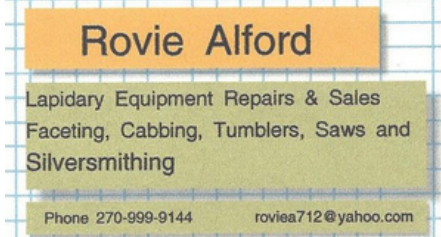
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The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in  
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Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and  
the club website. It will benefit both  
your business and our club.

If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

## Advertisers Are Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.

The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.

Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.

Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: [ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com) or

send to:

**Withlacoochee Rockhounds**

**PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634**

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# Withlacoochee Rockhounds

## Membership Form

### 2023

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Annual Dues:      Individual member, \$35.00.      Under 18 years of age, \$5.00

Check if returning member

Check if current member  
with change of information

Check if new member

Check if under 18

**Please Print Clearly**

Last name

First Name

Street Address:

City

State

ZIP

Phone Number (s)

Email address:

You may now fill in the fields on this form if you are viewing it on your computer or tablet.  
Each field may be clicked on and then you may type in your information.  
You will still need to print out the form, but your added information should show on the form.

**Give this completed form along with your check for dues made out to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds" to club secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or mail the form and your check to:**

Withlacoochee Rockhounds  
PO Box 5634  
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

2022